



**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
1803 W HWY 160
Monte Vista, Colorado 81144**



**FRONT RANGE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
SLV VISITOR'S INFORMATION CENTER
May 3 and 4, 2005**

MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

GROUP 1

Charles Rech
Rick Thompson
Jim Coleman
Gene King

GROUP 2

Donna Murphy
Larry Strohl
Karen Hardy
Josh Osterhoudt
Lucy Bambrey

GROUP 3

Jim Bensberg
Michael Bush
Keith McNew
Loren R. Whittemore

RAC members not in attendance: Virginia Patton and Joe Duda

GUESTS:

Jennifer Barela from Congressman John Salazar's Alamosa Office.

Bureau of Land Management/Forest Service Personnel:

Peter Clark, Mark Swinney, Bill Miller, Melissa Garcia, Laural Kagen-Wiley, Monica Espinoza, and Ken Smith.

Chairman Loren Whittemore called the meeting to order.

COUNCIL BUSINESS: Ken Smith informed the group that Roy Masinton was representing the State Director at the Rocky Mountain State Parks Executive Council Meeting in Colorado Springs and could not attend. Peter Clark would be the Designated Federal Officer for this meeting. The Resource Advisory Council nomination process has ended and there are 13 nominees for the five positions. The Secretary should make the appointments in mid-August.

Public comments: There were no public comments.

MANAGERS UPDATE:

Peter Clark, Center Manager/Forest Supervisor, Monte Vista: The most significant item for the BLM in the Valley is the travel management plan (TMP). Mark Swinney will talk more about this later. BLM has developed several alternatives. The staff has diligently completed the route analysis in a superior effort. Pete compared BLM travel management planning effort to the Forest Service travel management plan. One very significant issue to be considered is game retrieval. The Rio Grande Forest allows game retrieval at certain times. The Rio Grande National Forest wants to work with BLM to combine travel management plans. The Forest Service has pending legislation. Both agencies continue to emphasize grazing term permit renewals. Service First is fully integrated. Several adjustments are being made to make the joint agencies a smooth single office. Each agency has a vacant recreation specialist position. The possibility of combining the two positions into one in an effort to improve efficiency is being evaluated.

The Rio Grande National Forest has had a lot of issues with the Wolf Creek Project, including a 300 acre private in holding. There are timber sales on the Cumbres Pass area that will have issues.

Larry Strohl mentioned that the San Luis Valley BLM does not have a law enforcement officer and talked about how the Colorado Division of Wildlife has their own authority that is unlike BLM's rules. The group discussed the possibility of combining San Luis Valley BLM and Rio Grande National Forest law enforcement officer positions. Pete mentioned that one of our line officers is currently at the BLM Colorado State Office to discuss the San Luis Valley law enforcement situation. Pete would like to see law enforcement officers from both agencies dual delegated. The Rio Grande National Forest has law enforcement officers. Efforts continue to hire a BLM law enforcement officer.

Ken Smith, Royal Gorge Field Office: Ken introduced Lucy Bambrey, a new member representing Archeology/History, who has been appointed to fill Leslie Wildesen's vacant position. He updated the Council on the potential Browns Canyon Wilderness Area legislation. Congressman Hefley will probably be holding public meetings this summer to get additional input.

Travel Management: The Royal Gorge Field Office is still identifying issues and concerns for the Arkansas River Travel Management Plan and expects to hold another round of public meetings in June or July. Installing signs in the Gold Belt Travel Management Plan area is going well and is about 75% complete.

Fuels Management: The Field Office has completed a 490 acre Hydro-mulching project south of Salida and an 80 acre prescribed burn in the Deer Haven area this passed winter. Additional Prescribed Burns are planned in Deer Haven and the Sullivan Creek area this spring.

PRESENTATIONS:**Mark Swinney, San Luis Valley Resource Advisor**

San Luis Valley Travel Management Analysis Process and the McIntyre/Simpson Ranch update: Mark Swinney updated the Council concerning the status of the San Luis Valley Travel Management Plan. There was a major adjustment in overall process concerning the use of potential RS 2477 routes. In the beginning it had been indicated to the counties and the public that any route with a potential RS2477 claim would remain open to the level indicated on the 1976 Rio Grande National Forest map. The BLM State Office corrected this by indicating that RS2477 could not be used in the travel management planning process. This caused the team to revisit those routes previously analyzed under the first criteria. Mark mentioned that the team had to reassess 400 routes out of the 1800.

The core travel management team has received two proposals from the San Luis Valley Ecosystem Counsel. Mark reviewed the routes, issues, the proposals for each route, and all that has been involved in the process. The travel management interdisciplinary team has completed the route analysis.

Public meetings in Saguache, Monte Vista, and Del Norte from 4:00 to 8:30pm will be conducted. The dates are yet to be determined. All information from the planning process will be on hand for the public during these meetings. Once all information from the public meetings is compiled and evaluated, the team will begin working on the environmental assessment. Mark reviewed the route designation process and the different designations (open, mitigate open, limited, mitigate limit, and closed).

Issues which were global to all sub-units in the Valley were reviewed. Snowmobiling will be limited to designated routes. The area from Villa Grove to Raspberry Creek/Wild Bill Gulch would be open. From Raspberry Creek/Wild Bill Gulch to Clover Creek/Round Hill would be closed. From round Hill/Clover Creek to the Forest boundary would be limited to designated trails/routes.

Permittee access would be limited to two weeks before and after the grazing season unless approved by the manager under case by case basis. This would be only for permit necessity of livestock management.

Mark reviewed the current Resource Management Plan closures, which are from January 1st to March 15th, and could be closed up to April 15th due to the wet conditions for a particular year. The team is looking at Department of Wildlife polygons for concentration areas, production areas, winter range areas, and year around habitat to evaluate production closures. The travel management interdisciplinary team will take a lot of these issues to the Leadership Team for their decision. The target date for completion of an environmental assessment is Thanksgiving, and hopefully a final decision date could be around August 2006. A couple of the Resource Advisory Council members requested this information be made available at the BLM Colorado State Office.

Melissa Garcia: Wildlife Biologist

Threatened and Endangered Species in the San Luis Valley

Melissa presented endangered species for the Valley and their impact on the way the BLM in the Valley conducts work on projects/NEPA. She responded to questions with the help of Laurel Kagen Wiley. Melissa reviewed the Federal listed and sensitive wildlife species. Melissa elaborated on the difference between endangered and threatened species. Melissa talked about how McIntyre/Simpson is the largest population of southwest willow flycatchers in Colorado. Several biologists have confirmed these results.

Jim Coleman asked how these birds affect grazing. Melissa stated that grazing has not been affected. Melissa discussed the process that BLM uses with these birds. Melissa elaborated on the NEPA process and how it ties to the threatened and endangered species designations.

Laurel elaborated more about the process used for streamlining the analysis of impacts to these species. The Canada lynx was used as an example of a species that uses the streamlining process.

Mark Swinney mentioned that what Melissa was discussing was how wildlife affects timber, grazing, recreation, and other programs.

BACA / State Land Exchange – Bill Miller

The Baca State Land Exchange/Sand Dunes: Bill reviewed what is involved with the State land, Federal, and private. He reviewed the status of the process. He followed the different priority sites that are involved; there are four priority sites. BLM is not getting anything from this exchange; we are considered a trading stock within this land exchange. Bill mentioned that the higher the mineral rights show up within the public land; this could reduce the process of taking additional public land. The appraisal process has not been completed, which is a critical process within this land exchange. Site 3 for the San Luis Valley is near La Garita. Site 4 is near the La Jara Reservoir. Colorado State would like to acquire a large area of public land. The State Land Board would be the State Entity that would acquire the public land in exchange.

Peter Clark pointed out what would be off limits to hunting, when the land exchange takes place. The question was brought up to Larry Strohl as to when the land is exchanged from Federal to State land will taxes be an issue.

Review for the field trip tomorrow – Mark Swinney

Meeting adjourned for the day at 4:15 p.m.

May 3, 2005

The Front Range Resource Advisory Council members spent the day on a field tour of the proposed extreme 4X4 jeep route near the Stone Quarry, Rock Creek Allotment and the San Luis Hills ACEC and WSA.

Meeting adjourned at 2 p.m. The next Front Range RAC meeting will be July 6, 2005 in Canon City.

**Peter Clark
SLV Public Lands Center Manager
Bureau of Land Management**

**Loren R. Whittemore
Chairman
Resource Advisory Council**